

# LINE AND WORD SKETCHES IN HALLS OF CONGRESS

## Leading Personalities Among Nation's Lawma- kers Caught with Crayon in Uncon- scious and Nat- ural Poses.

By LOU ROGERS.

**T**HE gentleman will take their seats and refrain from conversation or leave the hall! Champ Clark whanged the Speaker's desk with a thud that bent the cast iron crease in his black Prince Albert coat sleeve. That crease, by the way, is the most impressive thing about him. His thin, muffled voice was peevish. You'd be peevish if you'd gavelled at the top of your lungs for twenty ponderous legislative minutes to get 430 men to quit telling each other what a bully vacation they'd had and uphold the dignity of government for a spell.

Yes, sewing circles, knitters of Belgian socks, and other gabbling centres, perk up! It was "Hoo-oo, Skinnay! C'mon over. Betcher I et the most turkey!" from the time the House convened—after its Thanksgiving recess—at 12 noon, December 7, till it adjourned for the day one hour later.

The Senate was convening at the same time. But over there the gossiping was quieter. Senators do not say "Hoo-oo, Skinnay." They say, "The gentleman from Missouri felicitates the gentleman from Maine on his Thanksgiving recess and trusts he enjoyed a generous portion of the white meat."

Like most unsuspecting citizens brought up on civil government, I had expected to see rows of long faced legislators in frock coats, slightly stooped, with an exalted sense of responsibility, file solemnly into the great council chamber and stand in hushed silence while the Speaker in stately and resonant tones announced the opening of the last session of a great Congress. At the stroke of his gavel I had pictured this mighty body seating themselves in decorous rows like jointed tennins and answering to the roll call with the profound and humble intonations of souls responding to the trump of the angel Gabriel.

It was thus—NOT! Over and over in the galleries I heard this remark: "Now ain't they just like a lot of school boys." Yes, they were and then some.

Every man jack of the 430 Representatives had to shake the hands of every other one of the 430. That made 860 hands pumphandling at once, not to mention the Speaker's two, the page boys, door keepers, and the whole clerical force. That convening hour was a glorious gossiping fest, a laughing, hilarious mob of happy men letting well-fed spirits loose in a whirlwind of sound and movement.

THE SOMBRE BRONZE CLOCK REMAINS SOMBRE WITH DIFFICULTY.

The bright spot of flame in the open fire beyond the cloak room arch danced jaggily. The sombre bronze clock on the gallery base with difficulty kept its hands at a worthy pace. Mr. Williams, the reading clerk, single taxer and soap-box spieler, yelled the roll call over his desk into the bedlam, his dumpy figure shaking like a mound of orange marmalade under the strain of getting heard. Now and then I caught an answering yip or yowl or roar, but oftener I could distinguish nothing. At raucous intervals the Speaker's gavel crashed down upon his desk until I peered from the gallery to see if its under side might be reinforced with concrete. His repeated announcement that "The House will be in order" had about as much quieting effect as kerosene on a bonfire.

There was a space of perhaps three minutes, when the blind chaplain lifted his voice in prayer, that the House held its peace—the surcharged peace of people bursting to converse or shout or tango. While Mr. Couden's earnest tones besought the Most High for wisdom to descend upon this, "the beginning of the end of the 63rd Congress," the austere figures of Washington and Lafayette seemed to come forward from the heavy shadows of their frames and stand in solemn benediction beside the Speaker. I remembered the scourge of war, our added weight of moral responsibility because of it, and then—the chaplain's lips closed on his "Amen," and the masculine babble shot forth again like ten thousand petty water streams escaping from high pressure.

This handshaking, babbling buoyancy is not just a convening-day geyser. I discovered, but on every day habit of the House. Whether the handshaking was the babbling or vice versa is hard to tell. In the midst of it, the actual work of the House looks like a homely squash vine struggling for air in a patch of witch grass.

And why shouldn't this body of men feel like a bushel of sprouting oats? The Hall (Champ Clark's designation) is most harmoniously decorated, a joyous golden tone prevailing like sunlight a bit dimmed with mist. A man must be a desperate grouch to be heavy in spirits. Twenty-one bucks per diem clarifies indigestion some. It's a small satisfaction—but one just the same—that a big corps of youngsters sits across the corner waiting to leap to your elbow at the lift of an eyebrow.

A FINE FEELING, THIS—ROOSTING ON THE PINNACLE OF THE NATION.

It's a puffy reflection, too, that the folks back home can sit up there in the gallery and see and hear a fellow townsman distinguish himself in flights of oratory, with the biggest printing plant in the world eager to inscribe his efforts on the pages of history.

Is it not a goodly feeling to roost on the pinnacle of the nation? Bet you'd shake hands all day and babble like a laughing water fall in a spring freshet.

I must say, however, that the House cheer does not spout forth from the same bubbling reservoir that feeds the handshake habit and the gossip. It is born in the bridge of the nose. It's a thin, weakened stream of wavering sound uncertain where to go. It's a cross between the falsetto whoop of an Apache war dance and the melancholy wowl of an alley feline. I heard it twice, when the 430 Congressmen greeted Champ Clark on convening day, December 7, and again when the joint session rose to welcome the President with his annual message against his bosom. I would not have believed that any body of husky American men could produce a sound so funny and seriously label it a cheer.

There is one habit of the House I wish I could skip, but it is too characteristic to dodge. In fact, it is a Capitol habit. It spreads all over the floors of the House and Senate, along every corridor, in every lobby, committee room and subway passage—the cuspidor habit, that symbol of masculine sociability always. Why in the name of common sense doesn't the Patent Office devise a system of self-flushing troughs, both sanitary and inoffensive to the eye?

I had fondly hoped to get sketches of favorite Congressmen with owls-of-wisdom expressions on instead of handshaking ones, but, I leave it to the nation, how could I get what wasn't there? It is the truth that if nothing else were handy, our men folks at the Capitol would shake their own locks of hair.

Champ Clark comes the nearest to being incased in that traditional legislative bearing you read about, though plaster-of-paris dignity would hit him off better. I chased him around from Speaker's lobby to private office, down corridors and through entrances and exits to discover which hand he shook hands with the most (all Congressmen are ambidextrous; it's a political qualification).

When Champ Clark presides nothing about him seems to move but his voice and a wooden right arm wound up beforehand to lift the gavel up and bang it down again.

Underwood, of Alabama, majority leader, and Champ Clark's chief aid, has as little spontaneous motion about him as the Speaker. He might be an Alabama swamp personified. His face is sombre and saggy, like a southing cypress. He is tall, and his shoulders hang forward when he stands or walks. His movements suggest moss-grown tree trunks stirring only after heavy deliberation. And when he speaks the air backs away from him in sluggish rings.

Mann, of Illinois, the minority leader, is his opposite in physical characteristics as well as politics. His compact, tense person is one big dynamic gesture. He hobs into every discussion on the floor of the House with an explosion of gestures and tone colors like an Illinois ear of corn popping all its kernels at once. If his hands are not shaking the hands, elbows or shoulders of his colleagues or patting some bald head projecting over a seat top they are combing his bristling whiskers. Could you see him under a microscope like a germ, his person would be the hub for infinite magnetic antennae affectionately fingering the nearest object.

"Nick" Longworth radiates jolly opulence like a Santa Claus wireless. I caught him in the Speaker's lobby receiving congratulations on his get-back, his round face beaming boisterously from out his big fur collar and tilted fedora like a happy cabbage sure of a coxey nook for the winter. And Joe Cannon was taking a look around, too, getting a line on his job in the 64th Congress. Down in the members' restaurant on the ground floor I snatched a caricature of him shaking food into his mouth with one hand while with the other he acknowledged congratulations on his own particular landslide. Joe Cannon's face is old, but as he strode up the corridor ahead of me, swinging his coat over his shoulder and dodging out the nearest exit to escape my pencil, I never should have guessed he had been first cousin to politics since government began.

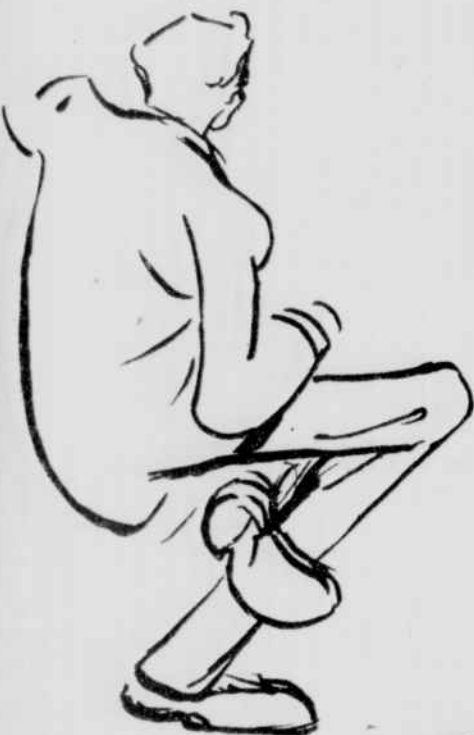
To what heights and depths and widths a Representative's hands may go in gesticulation and what echoing dents his voice may bump in the ceiling's frescos I discovered when Representative Gardner, of Massachusetts, informed the House of the country's military deficiencies. Senator Root lopez into the House very often evidently to relax from the pressure of Senatorial dignity. He drapes his lean lengths around, not ungracefully, and pump handles in all directions like the rest.

I have read that President Wilson does not encourage handshaking. Don't believe it, fair reader. It's a libel. When he read his annual message to the joint meeting on December 7 he began the ceremony by shaking hands with the Speaker and the President of the Senate. After the reading he again clasped their hands, his stiff little bows and large smile toward the rest of us indicating graciously and accurately: Had I time I would shake hands with you. Congress, especially the majority side, whose "thoughtful and constructive" brains have accomplished "long-to-be-remembered legislation"; with you, press, galleries, members' families, diplomats; with you, guards who so efficiently kept everybody from seeing this ceremony but holders of cards; with you, pages, door keepers, attendants, and so, shaking his own hand in congratulation, he left the chamber surrounded by Cabinet members and the escort committee, all itching to shake hands.



SPEAKER SHAKING  
WITH LEFT  
HAND

CHAMP  
CLARK  
ENTERING SPEAKER'S  
OFFICE



SENATOR  
ROOT IN  
REPOSE



MANN,  
MINORITY  
LEADER

THE  
BLIND  
CHAPLAIN



AUGUSTUS PEABODY  
GARDNER  
GETTING ALL HET UP  
OVER OUR MILITARY  
DEFICIENCIES



NICK LONGWORTH  
RECEIVING  
CONGRATULA-  
TIONS IN  
SPEAKER'S LOBBY

"UNCLE" JOE  
CANNON ESCAPING  
DOWN CORRIDOR

DIAGRAM SHOWING HOUSE CHEER